

618 CLAY AVENUE (Commercial)  
Jeannette  
Westmoreland County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6105

HABS  
PA  
65-JEAN,  
39-

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM TO:  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### 618 CLAY AVENUE (COMMERCIAL)

HABS No. PA-6105

LOCATION: 618 Clay Avenue, Jeannette, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

SIGNIFICANCE: A high concentration of window, tableware, bottle and specialty glass plants distinguished Jeannette as "The Glass City" early in its history. Significant housing stock consists of company-built row and detached double houses, and several privately constructed dwellings.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Matthew and Annie Mullen of Pittsburgh were among the first purchasers of land from H. Sellers McKee in September 1888. They paid \$300 for this lot and sold it the following January for \$500. The next month it brought \$600, and in November, the property sold for \$975. As with other lots down the block, this lot remained vacant for five more years until Alex C. Gordon purchased it in May 1894. Gordon, later listed as a teacher living on North Second Street, paid \$1500 for the land and built this building by 1895. A store was operating on the ground floor by October of that year, and on succeeding Sanborn maps, the business is shown as a grocery. The Gordons sold the building to grocer John Ruettger in 1897. Ruettger was living here in 1900 and had a store on the ground floor. Historic photographs indicate that at some time, he also had a grocery next door at no. 620. Ruettger rented no. 618 at different times to Charles C. Myers and Wade B. McClelland, both grocers.

Census records for 1910 show McClelland lived above the store with his wife Florence and young daughter. Wade's younger brother, who helped in the store, also lived with the family. In addition, a couple lived in the rear building. Ruettger sold the property to Avigdor LaVictoire, a sewing machine agent, and his wife Miriam in 1913. Five years later, Reuben and Sadie Levinson purchased the building and ran a grocery and meat business there before opening a real estate office down the block at no. 603. Mrs. Levinson owned the building into the late 1960s.

In the late 1920s, another grocery and meat market, Hodes & Co. run by Samuel Hodes, Morris Berger and Abraham Gross (see 518 South Sixth Street, HABS No. PA-6136 and 724 Clay Avenue, HABS No. PA-6108) was in operation here. A widow, Fannie Eck, and possibly her daughter, Nelda Eck, rented the rooms above the shop. A city directory from 1948 lists the Union Hardware Company doing business at this address, with two couples (only adults are noted) living upstairs. The husband of one of the couples was an

employee of the Ft. Pitt Brewing Company. The husband of the other couple was named Michael Kopcak, and he worked at the Jeannette Baking Company at 612 Clay Avenue. His wife's name was Mary.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

This early commercial building, dating to 1895, has a three bay façade over the storefront and a side entrance to the upper floor. Stone veneer pilasters on the ground floor terminate at a projecting wood band with side brackets that divide the storefront from the residential floor above it. The upper portion of the façade is slightly recessed between brick pilasters. Decorative bricks above the upper windows are molded with protruding circular buttons. The cornice has brick corbelling and a bracketed, pressed-tin cap. The metal, wood and glass storefront is early but not original according to historic photographs. By 1905, a two-story rear building had been built at the alley, and by 1910, the first of a series of wood-frame additions had been added to the main building itself. These additions have since been removed, and the rear building was torn down by 1950.

## PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

*Insurance Maps of Jeannette, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.* New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1891, 1895, 1900, 1905, 1910, 1916, 1925.

Deed Books. Recorder of Deeds, Westmoreland County Courthouse, Greensburg, Pennsylvania, 165/209, 165/315, 167/354, 183/549, 242/23, 263/368, 535/114, 636/384, 2008/1142, 2553/47.

City Directories, 1897, 1913, 1923, 1948, 1960.

Tax Assessment Books. Westmoreland County Tax Assessment Office, Westmoreland County Courthouse, Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1910 census manuscripts on microfilm.

## PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HABS and HAER undertook a comprehensive documentation of Jeannette, documenting industries, housing and cultural institutions.